

Caregiver Connection

May 2010

A monthly publication for Washington state foster and adoptive families and relative caregivers.
WASHINGTON DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES, CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION

Thank you caregivers!

The month of May is the time for all of us to stop for just a moment and show our appreciation for the foster parents, relative caregivers and others who have made a commitment to children in out of home care. Without your generous and caring spirit, we couldn't serve the children in Washington State in need of nurturing, stable homes.

You are the ones who meet the often complex and difficult needs of traumatized children.

You are the ones who know these children best.

You are the ones who follow the rules, keep the records, meet the schedules, advocate for the kids, attend the conferences, manage the behavior, connect with the families, visit the siblings, do the laundry, help heal the hurts, and keep everyone happy and on track.

You are the normal in these children's world!

Thank you for being there - enduring through the hard times and rejoicing in the good times.

Thank you for always remembering why you do what you do and staying focused on the children.

Thank you for the long days, the challenging moments, the worried nights.

Thank you for your perseverance, your patience, your endurance, your wisdom, and your perspective.

Thank you for your friendship, your partnership, and your cooperative spirit.

Thank you for being our colleague in this important work. We value and respect you.



On the road again...

Getting kids everywhere they need to be is one of the challenges of parenthood! We are pleased to support you in the activities with your children through the retroactive mileage claims you have likely just submitted. (Look for payment of those claims to come sometime in June.)

But now the focus is on managing these claims on an ongoing, monthly basis. Beginning with your claim for February's mileage, you should submit your mileage form to your child's social worker. You have probably already submitted for February and March! Use the same mileage form you used for the retro claim. If you don't have a copy, it is available through the Foster Parenting webpage on the Children's Administration website.

The ongoing policy adopts the standards presented for the retro claim. We now have standard policy throughout the state that allows coverage of mileage for school-related activities that promote educational stability, medical and other appointments, visits, and other unique needs as noted in the child's case plan. There is also limited reimbursement for mileage for training, respite, and child care.

Remember that mileage must be submitted within 90 days of the activity.

We appreciate the many miles you drive in the service of children and we are glad that we can support your commitment in this small way!

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Meet the Porter sisters

"Our family situation is not typical," says Linda Porter. "It is hard to explain. We are an amalgamation of surprises, good fortune, available resources, and combined blessings."

This is the way Linda starts her story. This journey to family started many years ago when Linda became mentor to a young girl named Precious*. Not a lot is known about Precious's early life. It appears that Precious was brought to this country and "adopted" by a family here through human trafficking. She suffered years of abuse and entered foster care at age 12. Linda stayed connected to her through many moves and disruptions, and finally, after being on the run for several months, Precious reappeared, weary and pregnant, and asked to become a part of Linda's family. Linda adopted her shortly after the birth of her baby.

Unfortunately, the story does not end there with happily ever after. CPS once again became involved when Precious was found living with her baby in a drug house. They were returned to Linda's home, but just a week later, Precious was gone again, leaving the baby behind, returning to a violent and unstable life with the baby's father. Linda adopted the baby, Shaylynn, when she was three years old.

Some years went by with occasional contacts between Linda and Precious. But eventually, CPS once again was in their lives. Precious and her husband and three sons were found living in unstable and dangerous circumstances. The boys had alcohol-related neurological problems and had PTSD from the chaotic and dangerous living situations they had experienced. The oldest tells of eating leaves and of witnessing a murder and burial!

CPS removed the children and turned to Linda's family as a resource. Linda became the parent to the youngest, 14 month old Nathan, and Linda's sister, Becky, became parent to Brian and Dominic, who were five and three years old at the time.

Linda and Becky have always been close as sisters, but now their bond is stronger than ever. They each manage their separate households, but the children all go to school together and Linda and Becky describe themselves as co-parents of all four children. Says Linda, "I take the morning shift and Becky takes the afternoon shift" in getting them all where they need to go. For Linda and Becky, though, supporting each other is about more than just who drives. In addition to some behavioral challenges, the sisters have had to deal with sensory integration disorders and ADHD. But the sisters describe their children as caring, compassionate, spirited, funny, and amazing.

And now we get to the happily ever after part. Adoption day for the three boys was April 2, 2009. All four children are active with the Duwamish Tribe's "Singing Feet", a children's drumming/dance group. (Linda and Becky are enrolled Snohomish.) To honor their Hawaiian heritage, they have participated in Pacific Island activities. Brian will be going to summer camp at the Kamehameha School in Hawaii this year. And they are active with the Filipino Youth Association Drill Team. Then there is also swimming, camping, Tae Kwon Do, and family counseling.

The sisters say that the children have been their best teachers in this journey. Linda adds that her experience has informed her professional work with abused and traumatized children. What she knew in her head, she now knows in her heart as well!

Becky and Linda know that it takes a village to raise a child. In fact, next month they are having a special "Welcome to the Journey of Womanhood" ceremony for Shaylynn, now 13 — "a rite of passage where she will be in the presence of all of the women of her world."

What a wonderful way to honor all that Shaylynn has achieved and all that the women around her have contributed to her life, and to Linda's and Becky's lives as well.



Brian, Becky, Shaylynn, Linda, Dominic, Nathan (in front)

Photo by C Penney

Foster families get free camp sites in Washington state parks

Foster children and their caregivers can enjoy big savings while camping in Washington state parks, because of a program established by the Legislature.

Campsite fees are waived for foster parents and relative caregivers with a foster child currently in their care. Camp fees range between \$19 and \$33 a night, depending on location and type of site. For qualifying families, the camping fee is waived. Camping at a first-come, first-served park has no charge, and campers reserving sites in reservation parks pay only the \$8.50 reservation fee.

The free campsite program is the result of a law passed by the Washington State Legislature and signed by Gov. Chris Gregoire two years ago. The law allows for reduced prices for Washington foster parents and relative caregivers of children when they camp with children in their care. The program is coordinated jointly by the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission and the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services Children's Administration.

"The free campsites program is one way we can lend a hand and say thank you to foster parents and relative caregivers," said Children's Administration Regional Administrator, Randy Hart. "Something as ordinary as a camping trip can have special meaning for youth in foster care. It allows them to share in the kind of fun family activities others may take for granted and provides opportunities for kids to build confidence and strengthen ties with their host families away from the usual distractions of everyday life."

"We are very happy to offer this program," said Rex Derr, State Parks director. "We know that many foster families already enjoy their state parks and were very appreciative of the opportunity last year. The current economic environment can be challenging for everyone. This is one of the best ways to have an affordable family vacation in surroundings unmatched for beauty, natural history and range of activities. These camping trips and visits to our parks create the kind of new experiences and happy memories that stay with kids for the rest of their lives."

Camping is available in 84 state parks,

You can too.

*Not her real name

with more than 50 parks offering camping by reservation and the remainder offering camping first-come, first-served.

For information about parks, visit www.parks.wa.gov or call the State Parks Information Center, 1-360-902-8844, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. weekdays. Online reservations are now available to free campsite program participants at www.parks.wa.gov, or make telephone reservations by calling 1-888-888-CAMPOUT (or 1-888-226-7688), between 7 a.m. and 8 p.m. daily.

To be eligible for the passes, licensed foster parents must provide foster parent identification or a foster home license in addition to a photo ID such as a driver's license when registering in any state park. Foster parents may also ask their licensor for a card that they can carry in their wallets. To make the telephone reservation, participants tell the operator they are a caretaker in the program and then show the appropriate ID upon arrival at the park.

Relative caregivers must provide a relative caregiver identification card and a driver's license when registering at a state park. To request identification cards, relative caregivers can contact Dinah Martin: madi300@dshs.wa.gov, (360) 902-0740 at the Children's Administration.

Advance reservations for camping are recommended; reservation campsites for summer weekends fill up fast. There are typically many available campsites on summer weekdays. Qualifying families also may use watercraft launches and pump-outs for free during their camping stay in a park.



Take good care of yourself

TOP STRESS RELIEVERS: THE BEST WAY TO FEEL BETTER

FROM

www.About.com

There are many ways to reduce tension and relax. Here are some of the stress relievers that are most effective for the amount of work and time involved. Some can be learned in the time it takes to read this page, while others take a little more practice, but there's something here for everyone!

1. Breathing Exercises

Deep breathing is an easy stress reliever that has numerous benefits for the body, including oxygenating the blood, which 'wakes up' the brain, relaxing muscles and quieting the mind. Breathing exercises are especially helpful because you can do them anywhere, and they work quickly so you can de-stress in a flash.

2. Exercise

Many people exercise to control weight and get in better physical condition to become more healthy or physically attractive, but exercise and stress management are also closely linked. Exercise provides a distraction from stressful situations, as well as an outlet for frustrations, and gives you a lift via endorphins as well.

3. Progressive Muscle Relaxation

By tensing and relaxing all the muscle groups in your body, you can relieve tension and feel

much more relaxed in minutes, with no special training or equipment. Start by tensing all the muscles in your face, holding a tight grimace ten seconds, then completely relaxing for ten seconds. Repeat this with your neck, followed by your shoulders, etc. You can do this anywhere, and as you practice, you will find you can relax more quickly and easily, reducing tension as quickly as it starts!

4. Music

Music has shown numerous health benefits for people with conditions ranging from mild (like stress) to severe (like cancer). When dealing with stress, the right music can actually lower your blood pressure, relax your body and calm your mind.

5. Yoga

Yoga is one of the oldest self-improvement practices around, dating back over 5 thousand years! It combines the practices of several other stress management techniques such as breathing, meditation, imagery and movement, giving you a lot of benefit for the amount of time and energy required.

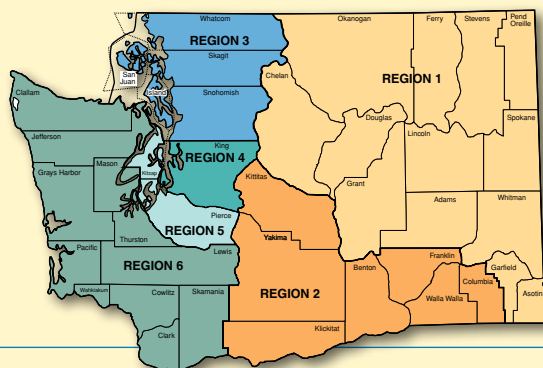
A Balanced Life

Bring your life into balance with these tips on good nutrition, family fun, and healthy activities.

Post Adoption **Support**

New requirement for registered counselors

Counseling is an Adoption Support benefit that can be provided by a psychologist, psychiatrist, or counselor registered with the Department of Health (DOH). Washington state statute requires that a counselor meet qualifications for counseling and be certified or registered to practice (RCW 18.19). A new law changing RCW 18.19 will go into effect on July 1, 2010. Any counselor who does not have new counselor credential by July 1, 2010 will be considered to be practicing without a license.



Regional Contacts

Region 1 – Spokane

Jan Lammers 509-363-3383
Pam Copeland 509-363-3379

Region 2 – Yakima

Steve Bergland 509-454-6924

Region 3 – Everett

Natalie Trigsted 425-339-1762
Linda Richardson 425-339-3998

Region 4 – Bellevue

Evie Shiveley 425-590-3072
Jennette Norris 425-590-3069

Region 5 – Tacoma

Cindy Anderson 253-983-6359
Laura Davis 253-983-6281

Region 6 – Tumwater

Cheryl Barrett 360-725-6758
Kim Mower 360-725-6778

Headquarters – Olympia

Lonnie Locke 360-902-7932

Toll free number: 1-800-562-5682

(listen carefully to the recorded message)

Important numbers to know when you take care of children in out-of-home care

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

ON-GOING AND CRISIS SUPPORTS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

Under contracts with the state, three private agencies are working to build supports for you within the foster care community. Supports include hubs, support groups, and matching new foster parents with veteran foster parents. To get connected:

- If you live in Eastern Washington, the Olympic Peninsula down through Pacific County or from Thurston County to Clark County, call 1-888-794-1794.
- If you live in King County or any counties north of King County, call 206-605-0664.
- If you live in Pierce or Kitsap counties, call 253-473-9252.
- If you live in King County, the Friends of Youth CARE program provides short-term counseling, education and support to help you care for your most difficult children. 1-888-263-3457 or 206-915-0459.

Family Help Line: 1-800-932-HOPE or www.parenttrust.org. The Family Help Line is a free, statewide training and referral line for the families of Washington state. Last year, the Family Help Line received more than 5,000 calls and requests for information. Calls can last up to 90 minutes and parents can call as often as needed.

Support for foster parents under investigation for allegations of abuse or neglect: Foster Parent Investigation Retention Support Team (FIRST) 253-219-6782. Monday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. – 8:00 p.m., or leave a message and receive a return call within 24 hours.

Foster Parent and Caregiver Crisis and Support Line: 1-800-301-1868

Mental Health Crisis Line Information: The crisis line telephone number for your county or region is available on the DSHS Mental Health Division website at: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/mentalhealth/crisis.shtml>.

GENERAL FOSTER PARENT INFORMATION FOR THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

FPAWS: Foster Parent Association of Washington State, 1-800-391-CARE (2273) or www.fpaws.org. FPAWS is seeking new members and supporting foster parents in many ways, including referrals to local associations.

Kitsap and Pierce County information about becoming a foster parent or to receive foster parent support: Foster Care Resource Network, 253-473-9252. Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. or leave a message and receive a return call by the next business day.

RESOURCE INFORMATION AVAILABLE STATEWIDE

Get connected to information on resources in your area by calling 211 – a toll free number.

Children's Administration Foster Parent Website:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/>

Children's Administration Foster Parent Training Website – Trainings are open to all licensed foster parents, licensed relative caregivers and unlicensed caregivers. For information about foster parent and caregiver training, check out:

<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/ca/fosterparents/training.asp>

CHILDREN'S ADMINISTRATION FOSTER CARE LISTSERV

Join the 400 people who have subscribed to the List Serve

<http://listserv.wa.gov/cgi-bin/wa?SUBED1=fosterparents&&A=1> for updated information on resources for the work you do in caring for children.

Family Planning Services are designed to help avoid unwanted or mistimed pregnancy and are available through your local Community Service Office (CSO). Each CSO has a full time Family Planning Nurse to help provide services to Medicaid eligible clients. There is also a Family Planning hotline number 1-800-770-4334.



Services cards being mailed!

Last fall, we told you the new client Services Cards – which replace the Medical Assistance ID, or medical coupon – would be mailed in November. These Services Cards are part of the implementation of a new system, called ProviderOne. Because the ProviderOne go live was delayed, however, the Services Cards were not mailed in November.

However, we now have a new implementation date for ProviderOne (May 9, 2010), which means the client Services Cards began mailing on April 13!

This mailing is sending more than one million Services Cards to Medicaid and General Assistance Unemployable (GAU) clients statewide. The mailing will be staggered by geographic area. For details, see "Services Card Mailings" at <http://hrsa.dshs.wa.gov/providerone/Clients/Services-CardMailing.pdf>.

Each person in the household will receive his or her own card. The card can be used for medical, dental, and vision services. The cards are permanent! Clients should keep them – they replace the monthly medical coupons.

And remember that clients can still be seen by their providers even if they don't yet have their Services Card. If they give their provider any two of the following, he or she can still verify they are eligible for services: their full name, date of birth, and Social Security number.

At first, when clients have both a Services Card and a Medical Assistance ID, they should bring both cards to appointments. Once they no longer have a current Medical Assistance ID, they can just bring the Services Card.

If you would like more information, attend one of our Services Card webinars; the last one is May 5th! For the webinar schedule and more Services Card information, visit our Client Web page at <http://hrsa.dshs.wa.gov/providerone/Clients.htm>.